

Global Turns:

Other States, Other Civilizations

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When *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* appeared in 1967,¹ globalization was not even a gleam in the eye. The world was much less visibly connected than it is today. Détente, for instance, was not yet on the political agenda. Indeed, its American architects, the future-President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, were – as we know from hindsight - yet to enter the White House. A difficult election in 1968 loomed for Nixon, if the failed former contender for the California Governorship - having moved back east as a partner at the New York law firm of Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Alexander and Ferdon - were to put himself forward as a candidate for the GOP nomination; and Kissinger was still in the camp of one of Nixon's Republican rivals, Nelson Rockefeller. The then-current occupant of the White House, Lyndon Baines Johnson, still seemed a redoubtable if not quite unassailable contender for re-election to the Presidency the following year. Only at the end of March 1968 did Johnson announce that he would not be running for the Democrat ticket in '68. One of the other begetters of détente, Leonid Brezhnev, had only just got his feet under the desk in the Kremlin as General

¹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1967).

Secretary in 1964, with Alexei Kosygin as the official Soviet Premier; and a full-blown Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 lay in the immediate future. Any flirtation with détente would be at a greater remove, still further ahead down the unknowable road of the future. The People's Republic of China was still more remote than the USSR, and an isolated, self-enclosed society. From 1966 China had entered into a phase of internal turbulence and score-settling known - somewhat euphemistically - as the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, it was only with the Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969 that the various protagonists of détente, including not only Nixon, Kissinger and Brezhnev, but also Mao's lieutenant, Zhou Enlai, could contemplate the protracted pavane that would lead to rapprochement. Elsewhere, in 1967, the clear-sighted French President Charles de Gaulle had for a second time vetoed the UK's application for admission to the European Economic Community, which remained under the auspices of the Treaty of Rome (1957) a decade-old six nation community of the small Benelux countries, France, Italy and West Germany. Germany itself was still divided into two separate nations, East and West Germany. The Iron Curtain ran right through the heart of Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic. The world was composed of discrete ideological and trading blocs. The turn to the global was, as we know now and the people of 1967 did not, a few decades away down a road shrouded in the fog of chance, contingency and futurity.

Similarly, the global turn in historiography was itself decades away. For historians are not soothsayers or prophets, and tend on the whole to frame their grand narratives and central lines of investigation according to observable landmarks in the world as they know it. Of course, this is not to reduce historians – their rich inner lives, their sensitivity to the unexpected which they encounter in sources, their imagination and ingenuity – to mere reflections of the contexts in which they operate. The relationship between historians and

their environments is more chequered, multi-layered, ironic and contrapuntal. Yet an emphasis on the global dimensions of history was in good part an absence in the historiographical scene in the late 1960s. There were exceptions, it is true - there have always been historians with global perspectives, most notably at that time William H. McNeill (1917-2016) of Chicago² - but their influence on the central fields which comprised the discipline was then minimal. Indeed, the assault, led by Oxford's Regius Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper (1914-2003),³ on the pretensions of Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) - whose biographer McNeill would later become⁴ - with regards to a meta-history of civilizations as a whole, and the continuing influence of the recently deceased Lewis B. Namier (1888-1960),⁵ who favoured the microscopic and cross-sectional over the vacuous windiness of non-technical history, made global history a suspect category. An allergic reaction prevailed in the historical community, and the global was treated with some scepticism. Other factors than the actual limitations on global interactions and outlooks determined the shape both of the historical profession and of its narrative categories.

In the field of early American history which Bernard Bailyn was coming to dominate, perspectives were certainly getting wider, but were not yet global, or anywhere near it. What was under assault was the idea of American exceptionalism. Was America fundamentally different from European norms? Was it, as Daniel Boorstin (1914-2004) suggested in *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (1958) and *The Americans: The*

² William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Testing the Toynbee System", *Sunday Times* [London] (17 October 1954); Trevor-Roper, "Arnold Toynbee and the Millennium", *Encounter* (June 1957).

⁴ William H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: a life* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), which was in its turn reviewed by Trevor-Roper, "The Prophet", *New York Review of Books* (12 October 1989).

⁵ Lewis B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 1929); Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1930)

National Experience (1965)⁶ - arguably reprising and extending the 'frontier' thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) - a pragmatic, non-doctrinaire society whose environment and the material life which it made possible predetermined a different set of experiences, culture and institutions? There were numerous variants on this theme. The dominant position was embodied in the Hartz thesis. The influential political scientist Louis Hartz (1919-86) had argued in *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) that colonial America was largely indebted to the liberal values of Lockeanism.⁷ Hartz had more recently followed this up in a collaborative project *The Founding of New Societies* (1964) with a broader survey of colonial settler societies as distinctive fragments from the Old World which had been – as it were – frozen in aspic in the New. While Spanish American societies encapsulated an undeveloped feudalism, English America was a kind of stunted liberalism, on top of which socialism would not - as it had in the Old World - eventually evolve.⁸

However, other trends had begun to appear in the historiography, which emphasised the connections between the American colonies and their English homeland rather than the abrupt discontinuities. Although Perry Miller (1905-63) focussed on the distinctive character of Puritan New England's "errand into the wilderness", he never overlooked the shared immersion of Englishmen and New Englanders in Puritan theology.⁹ In the famous 1954 issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly* on Scotland and America, Bailyn and his co-author John Clive (1924-90) opened up the topic of provincialism, exploring the similarities of Scotland

⁶ Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958); Boorstin, *The Americans: the National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965). Not that Boorstin was immune to the importance of ideas: cf. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Holt, 1948).

⁷ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955)

⁸ Louis Hartz et al., *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964).

⁹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1956).

and the American colonies as “England’s cultural provinces”.¹⁰ If provincialism were no longer pejorative, then this allowed a reappraisal of colonial Anglicization as something other than a matter of embarrassment, something other than the merely derivative. John Murrin’s Yale doctorate completed in 1966, “Anglicizing an American Colony: the Transformation of Provincial Massachusetts”, was supervised by Edmund S. Morgan (1916-2013), a pupil of Miller’s and another debunker of exceptionalist assumptions, though its invocation of provincialism seemed to acknowledge other influences.

Morgan’s works of the 1950s took the libertarian ideology of the American Revolutionaries seriously,¹¹ as did Bailyn, and both are sometimes pigeonholed as “neo-Whig”¹² historians of the American Revolution. However we should be careful not to overdramatize the division between the neo-Whigs and the followers of Namier. Of course, whereas Namier and his acolytes regarded ideas as mere “flapdoodle”,¹³ the neo-Whigs acknowledged the importance of political principles. Notwithstanding the genuine insights of the Namier school and the by then tottering claims of the Beardians, liberty and property, the neo-Whigs contended, were more than mere rhetorical smokescreens for the advancement of special interests.¹⁴ However, neither Morgan nor Bailyn *entirely* rejected Namier; in Bailyn’s case his work was aligned with the post-Namierite work of J.H. Plumb (1911-2001)¹⁵ who was conscious that while Namier’s approach to politics embodied a truth

¹⁰ John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, “England’s Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America”, *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 11 (1954): 200-13.

¹¹ Edmund Morgan and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953); Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic 1763-89* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

¹² E.g. Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 3.

¹³ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (2nd edn., London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 84.

¹⁴ Edmund Morgan, “The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising”, *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 14 (1957): 3-15.

¹⁵ Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books/ Random House, 1968), esp. p. 31 fn.

about politics in general, it had greater or lesser applicability in particular periods (and, by extension, places) within the eighteenth-century British world, depending on the nature, configuration and temperature of party divisions in different contexts.¹⁶ Thus, for the so-called neo-Whigs political ideas did not entirely supplant, but rather supplemented, the existing historical agenda, most obviously the attention paid to special interests, material life and the environment by the Namierites and the native Turner-Boorstin school. Nevertheless, by rejecting assumptions about the overwhelming dominance of natural conditions in the New World and the unimportance of ideas, the historians of ideology opened up the importance of Anglo-American connections and networks as rich sources for the understanding of eighteenth-century American politics. Nobody did more prior to Bailyn in this area than Caroline Robbins (1903-99) in her pioneering monograph *The Eighteenth-century Commonwealthman* (1959), though she in turn was indebted to Zera S. Fink who cleared some of the undergrowth in *The Classical Republicans* (1945); and it was the historian and political scientist Clinton Rossiter (1917-70) who in *Seedtime of the Republic* (1953) remarked that nobody could spend “any time in the newspapers, library inventories and pamphlets of colonial America without realizing that Cato’s Letters rather than Locke’s Civil Government was the most popular quotable, esteemed source of political ideas in the colonial period.”¹⁷ Nor should we forget the painstaking research - bibliographical as well as historiographical - of H. Trevor Colbourn (1927-2015) in *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (1965). Here Colbourn set

¹⁶ See e.g. Plumb’s review of Robert Walcott, *English Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1956), in the *English Historical Review* 72 (1957), 126-9.

¹⁷ Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), p. 141.

out the large canon of historical and antiquarian works - European as well as English - which informed the culture of colonial elites.

The world of American historiography was growing larger. Exceptionalist navel-gazing was giving way to a broader perspective on the shared culture of the eighteenth-century British world, on both sides of the Atlantic. Not that Atlantic historiography as such had arrived. That too was still some decades off,¹⁸ though some of the foundation stones were being laid. Moreover, there were other ways in which history was circumscribed - particularly English historiography - that served to delimit the scope of the new American history. For a start - and notwithstanding the stunning effort of Bailyn and Clive which was in due course to revolutionize the study of what came to be known as "the Scottish Enlightenment"¹⁹ - English history was still just that: John Bullishly anglocentric, one is tempted to say, except for the all-too-revealing fact that the familiar English icon of John Bull was the creation of an eighteenth-century Anglo-Scot, John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), who, as it happens, has a walk-on part in *Ideological Origins*.²⁰ Nevertheless, British historiography - the future integration of Scottish, Irish and Welsh themes into English history - was not yet even prophesied. The prophecies - or at least a stern injunction to the profession to write properly pan-British history - began to issue forth only from the mid-1970s when John Pocock (b. 1924) turned his hand to this area of historical enquiry.²¹ Pocock, also a "neo-Whig" historian of sorts and a pupil of Herbert Butterfield's, first reconstituted the legal and historical arguments of late seventeenth-century Whig and Tory

¹⁸ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)

¹⁹ Colin Kidd, "The Phillipsonian Enlightenment", *Modern Intellectual History* 11 (2014): 175-90.

²⁰ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 13.

²¹ J.G.A. Pocock, "British History: a plea for a new subject", *New Zealand Journal of History* 8 (1974): 3-21, reprinted in *Journal of Modern History* 47 (1975): 601-24. See also Pocock, "The Limits and Divisions of British history: in search of the unknown subject", *American Historical Review* 87 (1982): 311-36.

antiquaries,²² and then moved, by way of a celebrated article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* of 1965, towards the landscape of “neo-Harringtonian” ideas explored by Robbins and Bailyn.²³ Also operating on this terrain was the more Marxisant figure of Isaac Kramnick (b. 1938), who by 1967 was beginning to publish the first article-length fruits²⁴ of what became his book *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (1968).

Another now-obvious deformation of English historiography was the curious division between domestic history and the history of England’s colonies and empire. Imperial historiography was a distinctive sub-branch of English history, and except at crucial moments – the American War of Independence, the impeachment of Warren Hastings – the two historiographies tended to exist in splendid isolation, though in the field of eighteenth century historiography a figure such as Plumb – expansive in his ambitions and an influence on Bailyn – was not one for being confined by carefully demarcated small-holdings and allotments.²⁵ Nevertheless, English historiography was equally oblivious of the histories of its near neighbours and the global history of the British Empire. Nor, indeed, was there much investigation of the linkages between the First British Empire – the North Atlantic empire – and its immediate successor, the Second British Empire, centred on the Indian sub-continent. There was awareness, naturally, of the role of the tea trade in triggering the breakdown in relations between the colonists and the mother country, but little desire to

²² J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

²³ J.G.A. Pocock, “Machiavelli, Harrington and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century”, *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (1965): 549-83.

²⁴ I. Kramnick, “Augustan Politics and English Historiography: The Debate on the English Past 1730-35”, *History and Theory* 6 (1967): 33-56.

²⁵ J.H. Plumb, “Introduction”, C. Howard (ed.), *West African Explorers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951); Plumb, *Men and Places* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Plumb, *The American Experience: the collected essays of J.H. Plumb vol. II* (Brighton: Harvester, 1989)

explore in a serious way the deep entanglement between the First and Second British Empires. The distinguished imperial historian P.J. Marshall (b. 1933) had just published an account of the Hastings trial,²⁶ but his celebrated account of the connection between the First and Second Empires, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India and America c. 1750-1783* (2005),²⁷ was still forty years away. Moreover, the two distinct yet entwined First and Second British Empires were not yet fully established figures of speech in the historical profession. The term appears to have been introduced by the imperial historian Vincent Harlow (1898-1961) in his two-volume *The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-1793* (1952-64).²⁸ Even within the historiography of an Empire upon which the sun never set, the global dimension of history was not seemingly at the foreground of enquiry.

The world of 1967 was not yet globalized, as we would understand the term, nor was 'globalization' a term of art in history, or the humanities and social sciences more broadly. In the field of early modern history, there were a few singular polymathic exceptions to general trends. Charles Boxer (1904-2000) was an expert on the overseas empires of the early modern Dutch and Portuguese.²⁹ John Stoye (1917-2016), a tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford, worked on seventeenth-century English travellers and the encounter between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire at the siege of Vienna.³⁰ Jonathan Spence (b. 1936), who was to bring together Europe and early modern Ming and Qing/Manchu China in his

²⁶ P.J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

²⁷ P.J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Vincent Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-93* (2 vols., London: Longmans, 1952-64).

²⁹ See e.g. C.R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951); Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); *The Golden Age of Brazil, 1695-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (London: Hutchinson, 1965).

³⁰ John Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad 1604-1667* (London: Cape, 1952); Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna* (London: Collins, 1964).

researches, was just beginning his research career.³¹ So too was J.H. Elliott (b. 1930), who had published on the Catalan revolt and imperial Spain, but had yet to become a more decidedly Euro-Atlantic historian.³² Nevertheless, these figures were - at this stage at least - startling outliers, with a limited impact on the main directions of research within the discipline, certainly on the English world.

And yet, seen in retrospect, there were also faint stirrings in Bailyn's *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* of something new; something far-from-ostentatiously signalled, to be sure, but nonetheless significant. Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* points - gingerly but decidedly - towards the later global turn in historiography. There are intimations - understated, though by no means subliminal or merely intuited by the author - that the American Revolutionaries had been indebted to cosmopolitan perspectives on history, law and politics; cosmopolitan perspectives which sometimes went beyond Europe, and attempted to transcend the institutions and exotic political systems of old Eurasia. The second chapter of *Ideological Origins* is entitled "Sources and Traditions", and surveys the various intellectual tributaries which fed into the ideology of the American Revolutionaries. Bailyn zooms in from what seemed at a distance "a massive, seemingly random eclecticism"³³ drawn magpie-like from every part of the western cultural inheritance, to a set of highly significant "clusters"³⁴ whose ideological importance was much more than mere citation, annotation or invocation, but served to impart a shape to American Revolutionary ideology. These clusters included the 'Enlightenment rationalism' of the mid

³¹ Jonathan Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-shi Emperor: bondservant and master* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

³² J.H. Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (London: Edward Arnold, 1963).

³³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 23

³⁴ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 33.

eighteenth century; the English common law inheritance; the legacy of sacred history itself and later providentially-ordered phases of communities blessed - as that of New England seemed to be - with a divine dispensation; the particular legacy inherited from the classical civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome; and, most influentially, as Bailyn argued, a hitherto rich and neglected tradition of commonwealth thought which grew out of - though, it should be stressed, was by no means limited to - a whiggish dissatisfaction with the various compromises endured by the English Whig tradition. It was this last cluster of ideas which “brought these disparate strands of thought together” and which “dominated the colonists’ miscellaneous learning and shaped it into a coherent whole”,³⁵ and provided the central matter of chapter 3 of *Ideological Origins* “Power and Liberty: A Theory of Politics”.

The commonwealth or “real whig” ideology which Bailyn identified as the principal source for the fears which underpinned the colonists’ shift to Revolutionary principles was broad in its remit. Whig pamphleteers and historians drew not only upon England’s history, laws and institutions, but also ranged further afield, with an interest in other states and other civilizations. Some of these intellectual excursions fit easily with received assumptions about eighteenth-century anglophone culture. France and its early modern drift towards absolutist monarchy was a familiar foil for whiggish smugness in England. This was an area which Bailyn knew well, both from his own interests in France, and from the work of his colleague Franklin Ford (1920-2003), an expert in the politics of eighteenth-century France and the corporate claims of its two nobilities, the noblesse d’épée and the parlementaire

³⁵ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 34.

elite.³⁶ The French Estates-General had last met in 1614, and would not be reconvened until 1789. Late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Englishmen knew that their closest cross-channel neighbours had lived without a parliamentary assembly since 1614. One never knew, it seemed, when other parliamentary institutions, England's or indeed the assemblies of its transatlantic colonies, might succumb to a similar fate.

The Roman past was another familiar point of reference for eighteenth-century Englishmen. We know, moreover, from the obvious neo-classical elements in eighteenth-century American life, that classical antiquity – and Rome in particular – shaped the world-view of the republic's Founding Fathers. Bailyn drew attention, as we shall see, to these expected foreign staples in the Whig repertory; but he also drew attention to unfamiliar destinations and exotic landmarks, which are suggestive of an increasingly globalised outlook in English whig commentary. In particular, of course, Bailyn highlighted Robert Molesworth's *An Account of Denmark* (1694).³⁷ Molesworth's Denmark played a central role in the story of whiggism and its discontents.³⁸ How had this vigorous northern people – of a similar Gothic stock to the Anglo-Saxon English – succumbed, and so rapidly, to the chains of political despotism? If it could happen to them, it could happen to us.

However, the range of references Bailyn cited here from British authors, and in a later chapter on "The Logic of Rebellion" which drew upon American patriot commentators, went well beyond England's Gothic cousins of Scandinavia. Bailyn mentions discussions of the political systems of Spain, Poland and Russia, and further afield those of Egypt, India and

³⁶ Franklin L. Ford, *Robe and Sword: the Regrouping of the French Aristocracy after Louis XIV* (1953; New York: Harper, 1965).

³⁷ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 39, 65, 98-9.

³⁸ Robert Molesworth, *An Account of Denmark as it was in the year 1692* (3rd edn., London: 1694).

Turkey.³⁹ Edward Said's influential and highly controversial study *Orientalism*, which examined western attitudes towards the Middle East, would not be published until 1978,⁴⁰ a decade after the *Ideological Origins*. Yet at the margins of Bailyn's work he touches upon the stock contrast, found in early modern political thought and especially within the commonwealth tradition, between English freedoms and the slavish conditions of the Ottoman and Persian worlds. When I first read the *Ideological Origins* in 1985, these allusions to the worlds beyond western and northern Europe made little impression upon me, though I was struck at the time by Bailyn's emphasis in his discussion of "Enlightenment rationalists" upon the Swiss authority on the law of nations Emer de Vattel (1714-67), the eighteenth-century heir of Grotius and Pufendorf, who attempted to theorize the international order and who enjoys half a dozen index entries in *Ideological Origins*.⁴¹ Nevertheless, returning to the book in a world transfixed by the phenomenon of globalization and its backwash, Bailyn's discussion - however brief - of the global outlook and attempted reach of eighteenth-century commentators is what leaps out. It would be an exaggeration to puff Bailyn as a prophet of globalization, but his encyclopaedic knowledge of the source material of Anglo-American pamphlets and his faithfulness to his sources directed him to what became the staple table-talk of historians decades later.

There are - at the very least - intimations of the global in the cosmopolitanism Bailyn detected in eighteenth-century political culture, whose concerns ranged from ancient Rome to early modern Scandinavia, from the "oriental" despotisms of Turkey and Persia to the polities of China, Burma and Peru. Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* was unselfconscious about

³⁹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 63-5, 79, 129, 138.

⁴⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

⁴¹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 27, 29, 150, 178, 180, 210.

what Bailyn had discovered in the sources - an unadvertised globalized outlook - yet in other respects, however inadvertently, Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* constituted a harbinger of globalization, a faintly-heard distant firebell in the night.

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Eighteenth-century England and its cultural provinces were far from introspective. Inevitably, the vicissitudes of English history – the fate of the Anglo-Saxon constitution; the Norman Conquest and Yoke; the emergence of a mixed *dominium politicum et regale* in the medieval era; the Reformation, the dissolution of the monasteries and the redistribution of their lands among the gentry; the despotic pretensions of the Tudors and, more obviously, the foreign Stuarts from the north; the civil wars and later the Glorious Revolution – provided the cud continually chewed over in Anglo-American political culture.⁴² However, neither English political culture, nor its American offshoot was entirely self-absorbed. Notwithstanding a large element of caricature, distortion and prejudice in their attitude towards the Other - something which, as Linda Colley has shown, contributed both to

⁴² See e.g. S.B. Chrimes (ed.), *Sir John Fortescue, De Laudibus Legum Anglie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942); S. Klinger, *The Goths in England* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1952); Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986); Pocock, *Ancient Constitution*; Pocock (ed.), *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (1958; 2nd edn., Indianapolis: Liberty, 1998); Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

internal bonding and to a sharp distinction between Protestant Britain and an outlandish and benighted world beyond⁴³ - Britons were fascinated by other states, other civilizations.

Necessarily so, contended Molesworth, who was a scathing critic of scholasticism, what he called a “monk-like education”. The obverse was a worldly education, indeed one in which travel featured. Travel, Molesworth reckoned, was “a great antidote against the plague of tyranny”. “The same reason”, he argued, “which induces tyrants to prohibit travelling should encourage the people of free countries to practise it, in order to learn the methods of preserving that which once lost is very difficultly recovered”. It was understandable, of course, for travellers to head off towards Italy to see the remains of Roman antiquity. However, in terms of a clear-sighted political education, there was much to be said for travel to northern Europe: an illusionless variant of the Grand Tour. For in the north there was no other obvious diversion, in the form of great temples and other ruins which “dazzle” the traveller. There in the bleaker north the political system could be observed in all its raw nakedness without the distraction of foliage or fig-leaves: “in the northern kingdoms and provinces there appears little or nothing to divert the mind from contemplating slavery in its own colours, without any of its ornaments”.⁴⁴

Molesworth’s ostensible message was about how the Danes had lost their liberties, virtually overnight in 1660, “when at one instant the whole face of affairs was changed”. Molesworth recounted how “the Kingdom of Denmark in four days’ time changed from an estate little differing from aristocracy, to as absolute a monarchy as any is at present in the world.” However, Molesworth’s *Account of Denmark* was not just a specific explanation of

⁴³ Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: an argument”, *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992), 309-29; Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992).

⁴⁴ Molesworth, *Account of Denmark*, “Preface”, pp. B3v, B7v, C1v, C3r-v.

what had gone rotten in the state of Denmark. It was also a more general warning about the fate of mixed constitutions and parliamentary governments across Europe as a whole. Parliaments had once been a “common” feature of political life in late medieval Europe, but had now been “lost within this last age in all kingdoms but those of Poland, Great Britain [sic], and Ireland”. The lesson of late seventeenth-century Europe was that parliamentary institutions were in crisis, even in the Gothic heartlands of northern liberty.⁴⁵

The whiggish critique of Whig complacency depended, it transpires, on a pan-European approach to politics. Why, it was asked, had so many of Europe’s mixed governments – the norm in late medieval Europe – succumbed during the early modern era to the virus of absolutism? Why were there only a few stray survivors from the standard Gothic government of medieval Christendom? The defining characteristic of European early modernity, it seemed, was the slippery slope towards absolute monarchy. In 1771 - on the eve of the colonial crisis – the first edition of the Edinburgh-based *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated, with an intellectual authority understandably tinged with regret, that “the mixed form of government” once universal across medieval Christendom was “now driven almost out of Europe”. Whereas “an age or two ago”, France, Spain, Portugal, Denmark and parts of the Holy Roman Empire were “limited monarchies”, now there was barely “the shadow of liberty” left in these places, and the “arbitrary power” of their rulers now held sway right across the continent.⁴⁶ However, as we shall see, Europe did not set limits to the commonwealth tradition.

⁴⁵ Molesworth, *Account of Denmark*, pp. 39, 42, 67.

⁴⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (3 vols., Edinburgh: A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar, 1771), II, p. 727.

Pivotal in the transmission of the whiggish critique of whiggism from England to provincial America, according to Bailyn, was the widely disseminated work of John Trenchard (1662-1723) and Thomas Gordon (d. 1750), the co-authors of *Cato's Letters*, which had been widely reproduced in the colonial press.⁴⁷ *Cato's Letters*, it transpires, are full of references to other political systems, to the classical world obviously, but also in many places to the despotisms of the Middle East, and also to exotic forms of government found further east. Indeed, *Cato's Letters* provided a global conspectus of tyranny and servitude, though the primary focus was on the various forms of despotism – and the dismal superstitions which helped sustain them – found across Eurasia. Everywhere, so the message ran, “arbitrary” rulers “model their religion so as to serve all the purposes of tyranny”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, not all of their examples came from the Eurasian land mass proper. Trenchard and Gordon also included, for example, a comparison of the Catholic Inquisition with the human sacrifices paid as tribute to the Aztec ruler Montezuma;⁴⁹ the superstitions of Madagascar whose populace divided over the supposed numinous power of “a sanctified elephant’s tooth”;⁵⁰ the despotism of Ceylon and the hereditary “queendom” of Achem, on the northern end of Sumatra.⁵¹ Catholic priestcraft and the miseries which derived from it were set in a wider context of religious tyrannies. The interpenetration of religious and political ideologies and institutions was a dominant leitmotif in *Cato's Letters*. Indeed, in Europe outside Italy, it was argued, free states had championed the Reformation, while more authoritarian regimes had stuck with the convenience, as Trenchard and Gordon saw

⁴⁷ There is a modern edition, *Cato's Letters* (ed. Ronald Hamowy, Indianapolis: Liberty, 1995), from which all citations below are drawn.

⁴⁸ *Cato's Letters*, no. 66 17 Feb 1721, p. 470

⁴⁹ *Cato's Letters*, p. 470.

⁵⁰ *Cato's Letters*, no. 134, 6 July 1723 p. 930

⁵¹ *Cato's Letters*, no. 132, 8 June 1723, p. 910.

it, of Catholic superstition. *Cato's Letters* builds upon Trenchard's earlier psychological exploration of superstition and enthusiasm, *The Natural History of Superstition* (1709), and expands on its brief discussion of the political consequences of false religion and imposture.⁵² Moreover, there are occasional anticipations of the sort of analyses which Montesquieu would systematize in his treatise of comparative politics, *De l'esprit des lois*, most obviously engagement with the impact of climate on national character. The process was also two-way. Human institutions, as Trenchard and Gordon recognised, had an impact on the soil and the landscape. In *Cato's Letters* there was a fascinating comparative discussion of the environmental consequences of despotism. The countries of Asiatic tyrants were "desolate and uncultivated".⁵³ "What", Trenchard and Gordon asked, "has made Italy and Asia deserts, and their remaining inhabitants starving and contemptible cowards?" Only in part was this the result of military invasion; primarily "they have been made deserts by the continued depredations of their execrable princes".⁵⁴

The horrors of Oriental despotism constitute one of the central recurring themes of *Cato's Letters*, so much so that it is arguably, or in part at least, an orientalist text. Trenchard and Gordon obsess throughout the letters on the tyranny of the Grand Turk and the abject and impoverished servility of his vast empire. Of course, suffering was not uniformly spread in an Oriental despotism. A few sectors of society escaped. The court, or seraglio, most obviously, flourished, but so did the army, and certain parts of it in particular which most resembled the praetorian guard in imperial Rome. Because eastern potentates aspired to empire, they needed to give their "spoilers part of the spoil, or else they [would] fight but

⁵² John Trenchard, *The Natural History of Superstition* (London: 1709).

⁵³ *Cato's Letters*, no. 73, 21 Apr 1722, p. 538.

⁵⁴ *Cato's Letters*, no. 75, 5 May, 1722, p.552.

faintly for it". Even the most "absolute" of oriental rulers were required by the logic of their political system to "use their soldiers like freemen". Hence there arose elements of feudal privilege among the Sultan's troops, as well as the distinct corporate privileges of the janissaries, who, like the praetorian bands, "though they maintained the tyranny, have frequently killed the tyrants".⁵⁵

Drilling down to Trenchard and Gordon's footnotes, we can examine the sources they used to construct their depiction of the wider world. In their discussions of Oriental despotism Trenchard and Gordon cited a range of political and ethnographic works. Prominent among these were the accounts of Mogul India by the French traveller François Bernier (1620-88) and the Ottoman Empire by Paul Rycaut (1629-1700), the one-time English consul in Smyrna.⁵⁶ Many of Trenchard and Gordon's claims about the Ottoman world are heavily indebted to Rycaut's account of Turkish government as "a fabric of slavery", from the seraglio to an environment deliberately left desolate. Further afield, material on Pegu (what we would now call Burma or Myanmar) was derived from the Jesuit Nicholas Pimenta, as excerpted in the great compendium by the seventeenth-century anthologist Samuel Purchas (1577?-1626) *Purchas his Pilgrimage*⁵⁷ and Robert Knox's *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon* (1681)⁵⁸ provided information about the political structures of the inland realm of Cande on that island.

⁵⁵ *Cato's Letters*, no. 65, 10 Feb, 1721, p. 461.

⁵⁶ *Cato's Letters*, no. 67, 24 Feb 1721, pp. 478-80; François Bernier, *The History of the late Revolution of the Empire of the great Mogul* (2 vols., London: 1671); Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (2nd edn., London: 1668).

⁵⁷ *Cato's Letters*, no. 67, 24 Feb. 1721; Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimage. Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in all Ages and Places* (4th edn., London: 1626).

⁵⁸ *Cato's Letters*, no. 48, p. 325; Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1681).

The overall message of *Cato's Letters* is a loud echo of Molesworth's *Account of Denmark*, amplified indeed, because, while Molesworth paints a depressing picture of the decline of free polities in early modern Europe, Trenchard and Gordon portray the global ravages of tyranny. Indeed, Trenchard and Gordon claim that Europe is succumbing not just to its own home-grown absolutism, but to a form of Oriental despotism: "Most of the princes of Europe have been long introducing the Turkish government into Europe; and have succeeded so well, that I would rather live under the Turk than under many of them....If some unforeseen check be not thrown in their way, the whole polity of savage Turkey will be established by them in all its parts and barbarity."⁵⁹ Other places were worse off, and Trenchard and Gordon acknowledged "the dismal state of all Asia and of all Africa, except a few free towns".⁶⁰ Europe had not quite sunk so low, but the prospects were not good: "the arbitrary princes in Europe have not yet, like those in Asia, declared themselves masters of the soil; and their people have a sort of property. How long this will continue, I know not precisely."⁶¹ Nevertheless, quasi-Asiatic immiseration was the looming future for much of Europe.

Gordon was not only renowned for his collaborative work with Trenchard on *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*, but also, after Trenchard's death, for his translations and commentaries on Tacitus, the most widely read of the ancient historians in early modern Europe.⁶² By now Gordon's Whiggery was much less independent, and his work on Tacitus carries a dedication to Sir Robert Walpole, who had by this stage learned to suborn dissident whig pamphleteers. However, the ominous register of Gordon's work had not shifted to any

⁵⁹ *Cato's Letters*, No. 73, 21 Apr. 1722, p. 542.

⁶⁰ *Cato's Letters*, no. 48, 14 Oct, 1721, p. 325.

⁶¹ *Cato's Letters*, no. 73, 21 Apr. 1722, p. 542.

⁶² P. Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700", *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 135-52.

great degree; nor had his global interests which extended far beyond the Roman Empire.

Colonial Americans, as Bailyn noted, largely got their Tacitus filtered through the interpretation of Gordon, not least in the “Discourses upon Tacitus” which accompanied his translations.⁶³

The world of classical antiquity occupied an intermediate position between Englishness and Otherness. The Romans mattered enormously to eighteenth-century Britons. Obviously, the Romans were not in any meaningful sense the ancestors of the English. Rather the ethnic forebears of the English were the Germanic peoples, barbarians who stood outside the pale of the Roman Empire and who eventually challenged and toppled it. Yet for all that Englishness was antithetical to Romanitas, there was also a recognition that the institutions, values and ethos of Rome and eighteenth-century England were closely aligned. Indeed, the question hung in the ether: would the dismal fate of the Roman republic also turn out to be the sad future destiny of England’s vaunted parliamentary constitution? Was such decay inevitable?

Eighteenth-century Anglo-American culture was immersed in the classics. Some of this classicism, as Bailyn noted in *Ideological Origins*, was superficial veneer, no more than authorial swagger, the conspicuous consumption of ancient learning or a mere exhibitionist parade of erudition. But there were also, as Bailyn recognised, deeper connections. Bailyn himself used the unfamiliar adjective “Cationic” to describe an eighteenth-century Anglo-American culture entranced by the “half-mythological” ancient Roman Cato of Utica and the pseudonymous persona of Trenchard and Gordon.⁶⁴

⁶³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 44.

⁶⁴ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 44.

It is worth pointing out that ancient Rome was never for Bailyn, as it is for so many commentators on eighteenth-century Anglo-American classicism, something to be explored - if at all - only at the shallow end, by way of eighteenth-century readings of the Roman past. Rather, Bailyn himself was a keen follower of the new technical developments in twentieth-century Roman historiography which were reshaping its contours and interpretations. Ronald Syme (1903-89) - later knighted - had, significantly, without any knowledge of Namier's work, reframed the transformation of the Roman polity from fratricidal republic to more stable principate as a story of clan networks, marriage alliances and clientage. A narrative of constitutional change had been, as it were, Namierized, along lines of prosopography and kinship, in Syme's *The Roman Revolution* (1939).⁶⁵ Throughout his career Bailyn has expressed eloquent public admiration for Syme's historical ingenuity and achievement,⁶⁶ which also included a two volume biography of Tacitus (1958).⁶⁷

Gordon's *Tacitus* was part of a stream of Roman histories which explored the decline of the Republic, the civil wars and the uneasy coexistence of seemingly Republican forms and the harsh realities of the Julio-Claudian principate. Indeed, the English "Augustan" age is a misnomer of sorts. Certainly, Augustus - notwithstanding the closure he had brought to the civil wars - was no icon for eighteenth-century English Whigs. Quite the reverse, in fact. As Reed Browning would emphasise in *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs* (1982), the term Augustan "ignores the point that, in politics at least, no one thought

⁶⁵ Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

⁶⁶ Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography", *American Historical Review* 87 (1982): 1-24, at p. 8; Bailyn, "History and the Creative Imagination", in Bailyn, *Sometimes an Art: Nine Essays on History* (New York: Knopf, 2015), pp. 85-6. Cf. Jack N. Rakove, "Bernard Bailyn", in R.A. Rutland (ed.), *Clio's Favorites: Leading Historians of the United States, 1945-2000* (Columbia MI: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 8.

⁶⁷ Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (2 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958)

that Britain should be Augustan. Augustus had completed the destruction of the republic.”⁶⁸

For Gordon, in his “Discourses upon Tacitus”, Augustus was a byword for surreptitious tyranny. Octavius, he wrote, had “usurped the Empire by methods so low and vile, as brought disgrace even upon usurpation; by a thousand frauds, and turns suddenly made”.⁶⁹

The lesson of Roman history - and this was something that cut to the quick of eighteenth-century whiggish self-congratulation - was that the institutions of the republic had been effectively neutered without any need for a bloody show of visible castration. How could one tell at any moment whether one’s apparent constitution was operative – or, worryingly, not? At Augustus’s death the people were still “deceived into a belief that they still enjoyed their old government, because their magistrates had still their old names, though with just as much power as he [Augustus] thought fit to leave them.”⁷⁰ Put bluntly, Augustus had reduced the Senate and People of Rome to “cyphers and carcasses”.⁷¹ Nor was Augustus’s successor, the inwardly fretful and outwardly solicitous Tiberius, any better. According to Gordon, Tiberius had been a “complete dissembler”, “a prince of infinite distrust, craft and cruelty”. True, Tiberius had “lived in perpetual vassalage to his own fears”, for, as Tacitus had shown, nobody in the Julio-Claudian lineage could sleep easy, rest easy, or even eat unselfconsciously without fear of the poisoner, the Emperor least of all. But Tiberius’s understandable paranoia, notwithstanding his purported punctiliousness about constitutional forms, shattered even the empty simulacrum of the old constitution. Tiberius, Gordon noted, “affected to derive all power from the Senate, yet left them but the shadow

⁶⁸ Reed Browning, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1982), p. 9.

⁶⁹ Thomas Gordon, “Discourses upon Tacitus”, in Gordon (ed.), *The Works of Tacitus* (2 vols., London: 1728-31), I, p. 43.

⁷⁰ Gordon, “Discourses upon Tacitus”, I, p. 46.

⁷¹ Gordon, “Discourses upon Tacitus”, I, 49.

of authority, and was even jealous of that shadow". Gordon jibbed in particular at Tiberius's pose as a faux-Commonwealthman: "The Commonwealth was always in his mouth, even while he was acting the tyrant most." Long before the blatant and disgusting tyrannies of Caligula and Nero, the slick seeming observance of constitutional proprieties under the first Julio-Claudian emperors had barely concealed the horror of constitutional exhaustion and enervation. Gordon's subtle but unequivocal verdict still resonates: "all corruptions creep easily in, but are with great difficulty removed".⁷²

Other eighteenth-century historians of ancient Rome sang the same song, at least on this specific point. The Aberdonian classicist Thomas Blackwell (1701-57) in his *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus* pointedly compared the Roman and British constitutions, warning that Augustus had "preserved the old forms and appearances of the magistrates, yet having wholly changed the government and destroyed the vitals of their liberty".⁷³ Not that Roman history provided a single straightforward message for the eighteenth-century present. There was some divergence of views among contemporary historians and antiquaries about what had caused the decline of the Roman republic, and if indeed the Roman republic was properly tripartite on the eighteenth-century British model. Nathaniel Hooke (d. 1763) took the view that the fault lay with Rome's optimates, not least Sulla who had "changed the very form of the Republic, almost annihilated the tribunitian power, and reduced the government to an aristocracy",⁷⁴ whereas Blackwell blamed the democratic element in the Roman constitution – "the poison long latent" in its "bosom" – as well as the decline in the martial virtue of the people.⁷⁵ Laurence Echard (c.1670-1730) spread the blame, arguing

⁷² Gordon, "Discourses upon Tacitus", II, p. 76.

⁷³ Thomas Blackwell, *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus* (3 vols., Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour and Neill, 1753-63), I, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Nathaniel Hooke, *The Roman History* (4 vols., London: Bettenham, 1738-71), II, p. 560.

⁷⁵ Blackwell, *Memoirs*, I, p. 186.

that Rome's loss of liberty derived from "numerous abuses, and notorious corruptions in her government and inhabitants".⁷⁶ The dramatist and man of letters Colley Cibber (1671-1757) raised the vexing question – certainly for colonists – of how far the structures of a republican empire inevitably pulled its institutions in the direction of dictatorship. Rome's convulsions arose from "making their heroic plunderers abroad great enough to plunder at home". "From a dominion so surfeited with power," he asked, "what repose could be expected where the same commanders that had extended the public conquests abroad, were now as active each to be their masters at home"?⁷⁷ The lesson of Roman history was not – self-confident architectural, literary and artistic appearances to the contrary – one to inspire buoyant self-confidence in the Whig constitution.

Nor should Roman history be thought of – as perhaps we still think of it now – as a field unto itself. That is not how influential contemporaries saw it. Interestingly, Gordon's Tacitus did not confine itself to Roman history. Gordon occasionally digressed onto orientalist topics and sometimes strayed even further afield. Turkey and Persia were grist to Gordon's mill, and he also included discussion of Pegu (Burma), the Chinese mandarinat and the Inca realm of Peru in the midst of his commentaries – ostensibly – on Tacitus.⁷⁸

So what? (to echo a familiar Bailynism); does any of this matter? Does the cosmopolitanism of the Revolutionaries – and of the eighteenth-century British culture from which their values derived – add anything to our knowledge of the American Revolution? Let us not forget a warning which immediately preceded the American Revolution: the Swedish "revolution" of 1772, when the new king Gustavus III (1746-92) seized control from the

⁷⁶ Laurence Echard, *The Roman History* (10th edn., London: 1734), p. 293.

⁷⁷ Colley Cibber, *The Character and Conduct of Cicero, considered* (London: John Watts, 1747), pp. 22, 72.

⁷⁸ See e.g. Gordon, "Discourses upon Tacitus", I, pp. 19, 26, 56, 86, 116, 120; II, pp. 13, 19-22, 43-4, 52, 79-80, 93, 103, 108.

ruling political class - then divided between the parties of Hats and Caps - and in particular from the dominant party, the Caps, and moved Sweden in the direction of autocracy, however supposedly enlightened. The British publication the *Annual Register* described the royalist coup in Sweden as “one of the most extraordinary revolutions, considered in all its parts, which we can meet with in ancient or modern history”.⁷⁹ The protagonists of the mid 1770s were keenly aware of the Swedish royalist coup of 1772, though for posterity the Scandinavian horizon of Anglo-American political culture has dimmed to the point of obscurity. Their blazing portents, their well-defined mental maps have ceased to be ours; and even now the best informed historians of the 1770s rarely connect the case of Sweden with the crisis of the first British Empire. However, the lush historical richness and exotic geographical diversity found within Bailyn’s *Ideological Origins* serve as constant nagging reminders that to know American history alone is barely to begin to understand the worldview of the Revolutionary generation. For the record, Bailyn’s *Ideological Origins* has five index entries for Sweden. Bailyn quotes Burke’s private complaint in 1770 that “without some extraordinary change”, the English court might “assume as uncontrolled a power” in England “as the King of Sweden has done in his”,⁸⁰ and also invokes the complaint of colonial patriots that the liberties of Europe were in eclipse, indeed, that “two kingdoms, those of Sweden and Poland, have been betrayed and enslaved in the course of one year.”⁸¹ For, of course, the year of Sweden’s royalist coup was also that of the first Partition of Poland, a cynical slicing up of an old established polity by the powerful territorial empires of

⁷⁹ “History of Europe”, *The Annual Register for the year 1772* (London, 1773), p. 7, quoted in R. Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: the Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 269.

⁸⁰ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 146

⁸¹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 138

Russia and Austria and the rising militaristic regime of Brandenburg-Prussia. Bailyn quotes a fear that an independent America might indeed end up being “parceled out, Poland-like”.⁸²

What do they know of American history, who only America know? This accusation could never be levelled at Bailyn, and certainly not at the *Ideological Origins*. Although the benefit of hindsight led R.R. Palmer (1909-2002) and Jacques Godechot (1907-89) to posit a late eighteenth-century era of Atlantic Revolutions,⁸³ Bailyn never lost sight of the fact that this supposed chain reaction began at a time in the 1770s when European liberty seemed rather on the point of expiry. The trick is to see the past - as it is indeed presented in *Ideological Origins* and elsewhere in Bailyn’s writings and teaching - not in retrospect, but from the imagined vantage-point of a forward-looking, and indeed outward-looking, past; a colonial America which saw itself as an extension of Europe.

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Nowadays global history is a fixture on the historical scene. Indeed, there is a recognition that long before the contemporary phase of globalization, there was a phenomenon of early modern proto-globalization. However, between the first appearance of Bailyn’s *Ideological Origins* in 1967 and such classic accounts of globalization as A.G.

⁸² Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 142

⁸³ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolutions* (2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press 1959-64); Jacques Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the eighteenth century 1770-1799* (transl. H. Rowen, New York: Free Press, 1965).

Hopkins's collection *Globalization in World History* (2002)⁸⁴ and the late Sir Chris Bayly's classic work *The Birth of the Modern World 1780 - 1914* (2004),⁸⁵ there were other incremental steps which brought European historiography into dialogue with extra-European concerns. Highly significant was the drift away from a nation-state model in historiography towards what might be called the composite state model in the work of the late Helmut Koenigsberger (1918-2014) and John Elliott.⁸⁶ Attention on the looser bonds of composite states helped to foreshorten for historians the conceptual distance between a state's European territories and its overseas possessions, and to bring Old World and extra-European historiographies into alignment under a more capacious and refurbished rubric of 'empire'. The work of Elliott,⁸⁷ Anthony Pagden – including *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (1990) and *Lords of all the World* (1995)⁸⁸ – and David Armitage's *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (1996)⁸⁹ were particularly suggestive on this front, as is the world of empires the reader encounters in John Wills's global account of the world as it was in the year 1688.⁹⁰ More recently, of course, global empire has emerged as an unduly neglected theme of the Enlightenment in the work of Sankar Muthu.⁹¹ Another important - often overlooked - staging post in anglophone scholarship was *The Great Map of Mankind* (1982) by P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, which set out in considerable

⁸⁴ A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002).

⁸⁵ Chris Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). See also Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1989).

⁸⁶ H.G. Koenigsberger, "Dominum regale or dominium politicum et regale: monarchies and parliaments in early modern Europe", in Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi: essays in early modern history* (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 1-25; J.H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies", *Past and Present* 137 (1992), 48-71.

⁸⁷ J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁸⁸ Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Pagden, *Lords of All the World: ideologies of empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500-c.1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁸⁹ David Armitage, *Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

⁹⁰ John E. Wills, *1688: A Global History* (London: Granta, 2001).

⁹¹ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

detail how informed (and, of course, also studiously misinformed) eighteenth-century Britons were about the customs, institutions and religions of the wider world.⁹² More recently, we have learnt to see the eighteenth century in a totally different light, not only at the level of states and clerisies, but also, more surprisingly perhaps, at the micro-level of the family, as in Emma Rothschild's superb study of the far-flung Johnstone dynasty in *The Inner Life of Empires* (2011).⁹³

Times change and historiography changes too, if never quite in tandem. Nevertheless, novelty needs to be calibrated against the age-old warning from Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new under the sun. Although Whig history has been out of fashion since the devastation wrought on that idiom by Butterfield,⁹⁴ there is still a residual Whig outlook - a variant of presentism - that lurks (unacknowledged) in the academic mentality: the notion that somehow we are smarter than our ancestors (including our recent academic forebears), more sophisticated, more informed, and now more globalized. But even the most cursory glance at the *Ideological Origins* and at the sources Bailyn brought to the fore shows that eighteenth-century political commentary had global aspirations. There were marked fears, as late as the 1770s, that despotism was on the rise, just as now we fear a post-modern species of authoritarianism rising on the back of populist discontents, demagoguery, and a ready supply of post-truth-based nostrums. Back then news travelled slowly, of course, and was mingled with cliché, caricature and misrepresentation; rather like the "fake news" we have to sift these days, but taken at a more sedate pace.

⁹² P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: J.M. Dent, 1982).

⁹³ Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)

⁹⁴ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931)